

MAUT RAC - PAST EVENTS

Greek Exhibit at Pointe-à-Callière Museum, April 10, 2015

The Pointe-à-Callière Museum presented the largest exhibition on Ancient Greece ever produced in North America. The exhibition spanned over 5,000 years of Greek history and culture and included artifacts that date back to the origins of the cradle of Western civilization. Pointe-à-Callière was the first stop of a North American odyssey of this exhibition. The group tour included a half hour multi-media presentation.

Nature Ecology Walk, April 23, 2014

The MAUT Retirees' Association held a Nature Ecology Walk at the Morgan Arboretum in Ste. Anne de Bellevue on April 23. Chris Cloutier, the Arboretum Naturalist, guided a walk through the Arboretum. Lunch before the walk was enjoyed at La Coopérative du Grand Orme, now located in the historic Simon Fraser House. This stone dwelling, over 200 years old, was the home of Simon Fraser, the fur-trader.

Concert & Dinner, March 13, 2014

We attended a concert at Bourgie Hall at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) at 6 pm.; it is part of the 5 à 7 Concert series. These concerts begin at 6 pm and continue for one hour only. The group performing that night was Trifolia, a trio consisting of **Marianne Trudel**, accordion, piano, voice and Wurlitzer, **Etienne Lafrance**, counterbass and **Patrick Graham**, percussion. They have several YouTube sites where you may listen to their music. After the concert we had dinner at L'Academie, 2100 Crescent Street. Some took advantage of member prices at the MMFA and the discount for MMFA members at L'Academie.

Excursion to the McGill Bird Observatory, May 15, 2013

Ten MAUT retirees and spouses enjoyed a tour of the McGill Bird Observatory (MBO), adjacent to the Morgan Arboretum in St. Anne de Bellevue. We all arrived by 6:30 a.m., the appointed time, and were met by volunteers and by Simon Duval, a licenced bird bander who has worked at the MBO during spring and fall migration seasons since 2008. The day was sunny but cool, beginning at about 6 C and warming up to around 16 C by 11:30 am, when the last visitors departed.

The MBO studies abundance and distribution of migrating and resident songbirds by capturing birds in mist nets and banding them, and by observing birds in the MBO terrain, which includes forest, fields, and marshland. Volunteers and a licenced bander show up at sunrise every day during spring migration (ending June 1) and fall migration; a fall banding station for migrating Saw-whet Owls is also operated.

About 20 mist nets, each some 4 meters tall and 10 meters long, are set up in a variety of strategic places such that migrating or resident birds, flying between trees or bushes, are caught in the nets. Birds are not harmed by netting, as they fall into a loose flap of the nylon netting and are gently entangled. Workers pass by each 30 minutes during the morning, "extract" the birds, and place them in cloth bags, where they usually remain calm. All captured birds are brought back to a central shack where the bander identifies them, attempts to determine sex and age, checks the breastbone for fat content, measures the wing length and in some cases bill or tail length, and records any other observations. Each bird receives an aluminum band with a unique number engraved into the band. Bands are small cylinders, weighing 0.1 gram or so, that are attached around the tarsus (lower leg/ankle) of most birds, although in some cases the band is attached to the thigh (tibiotarsus). The bands are loose, can rotate, and do not impair the birds' behavior so far as is known. Birds have been repeatedly captured after migrating over thousands of miles during several years in a row and successfully breeding.

The birds are then photographed and released. Most of the birds that we saw banded appeared relatively calm, even though they were being held in the hand of the bander, their wings were spread for examination, and their breast or head feathers were gently blown upon to scrutinize the skin and musculature below the down. A couple of birds (especially a

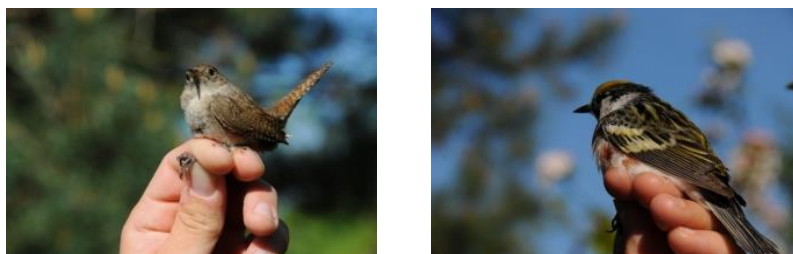
Common Grackle) pinched the bander's fingers with their bills, and one released some feces onto the bander's hands. When being photographed just before release, the bander would gently raise the bird's bill to "pose" the bird, who usually did just that, looking calm and beautiful!

This day we actually saw two banded birds that are rarely caught there: an American Woodcock and a Solitary Sandpiper (see photos). The American Woodcock is a very chubby, buffy-brown bird with an extremely long bill whose tip is flexible, as it uses the bill to probe in damp soil for invertebrates that it eats. Couples live and nest in woodlands. This bird was a female with a bare spot on her belly that serves as a brood patch, allowing the bird to warm up its eggs on the nest. This was proof that this female was nesting in the vicinity.



The Solitary Sandpiper is a migrant that nests in marshes in the far north. It winters in the tropics. This is a medium-size sandpiper with a relatively long, thin bill. It is brownish-gray, with streaks on the head and neck, and yellowish legs. It closely resembles the Green Sandpiper, its Eurasian cousin. It has only been rarely banded at the observatory. We also saw a single Solitary Sandpiper in the marsh later during the morning. It was accompanied by three Least Sandpipers.

Other birds that we observed being banded were: 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 1 Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1 Northern Waterthrush, 1 Yellowthroat, 1 Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, 1 House Wren, 1 White-throated Sparrow, and several Red-winged Blackbirds. We had a good look at a Red-tailed Hawk flying over the area, a distant look at an Osprey, and close-up looks at 5 Turkey Vultures. We saw (and heard!) several nesting Canada Geese, some Mallards, and three couples of Wood Ducks, which also nest there, sometimes in nesting boxes that are erected by the Observatory. Baltimore Orioles were frequently seen and singing, as were Yellow Warblers and Song Sparrows. We also heard, but did not see, numerous Warbling Vireos, House Wrens, and Chipping Sparrows. Several Eastern Kingbirds were seen perching on trees and hawking for insects.



All ten participants expressed their pleasure at having been able to see first-hand how bird banding works, and how observation of feather length, coloration, and shape of feather tips helps banders to determine sex and age of these birds. They seem much smaller up close than when they are in the wild! We were able to observe the details of the brightly-colored feathers of warblers, the fine bill of the wren, the bluish iridescent head of the Common Grackle, and the long bill of the American Woodcock with its flexible tip. A great learning experience.



A big thanks to Nick Acheson, Excursion Leader

Guided Tour of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, March 28, 2012 & April 12, 2012

A guided tour of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, arranged especially for McGill retirees, was held on March 28, 2012. This tour was especially interesting since it included a visit to the new Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Quebec and Canadian Art. On April 12, 2012, another tour of the MMFA featured Emeritus Professor John Fossey, who was delighted to show McGill retired colleagues some gems from the ancient Greek and Roman collection for which he is largely responsible. Events of the same kind are planned for the future and any suggestions should be sent to [Darlene Canning](#).

